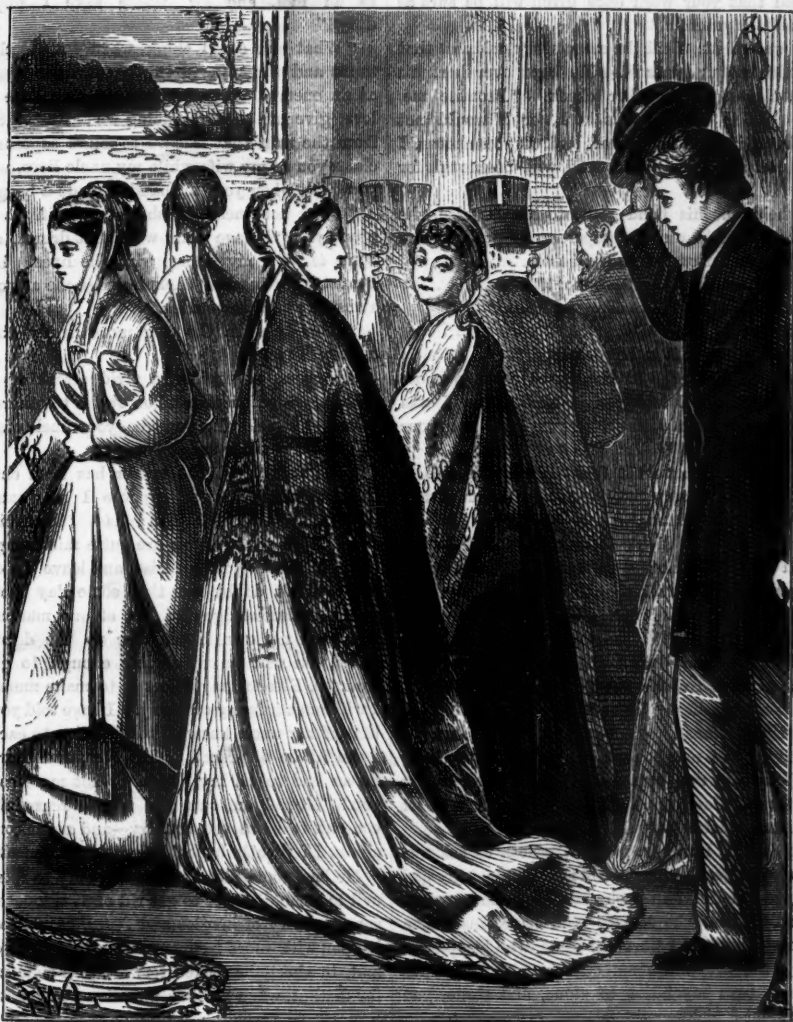


THE QUIVER

Saturday, May 29, 1869.



"I beg your pardon."—p. 532.

UNDER FOOT.

BY ALTON CLYDE, AUTHOR OF "MAGGIE LYNNE," ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.—AN INTERRUPTION.

"**ELEANOR**," continued Mark, "you will consent to my proposal, if you are not blind both to your own good and mine. Far better for us to try to be happy apart, than drag out a life of misery together."

"Yes; far better." She spoke like one talking in sleep.

Still deceived by her manner, he went on: "I will make you all the compensation that I can. Name

any sum you please, and if it is within my means, it shall be placed at your disposal; and if your objection is, being required to sign the agreement, tell me, and I will tear it before your eyes. Only give me your promise; I know enough of you to be satisfied that your word once given will be sure as your written promise."

She was silent. Still the same stony coldness that he could not understand. He bent over her, his breath almost fanning her cheek. "Promise me, Nelly. It is best for us both, or I would not urge it. Give me the paper, and, if you choose, I will destroy it now; your word will be enough for me."

He held out his hand; but, to his surprise, she kept a firm hold on the paper, and, putting him quietly back, thrust it into her bosom.

"What does this mean, Eleanor?"

"That I intend to take charge of this."

"Why?"

"Because I wish it to be preserved."

He forced a laugh. "Nonsense! what purpose could it serve? I told you just now that I was willing to dispense with it, if you gave me your promise."

"You did. I have not forgotten that; still, I think it wise to keep the paper by me, for it may prove useful as evidence."

Mark's lips grew livid, as he said, "Still chafing the old sore. Eleanor, what mad folly has seized you?—why do you talk about evidence? I cannot understand you to-night." He added, suddenly, softening his voice, "Bitter words sound so strange on your lips. What does it all mean?"

"That I have reached the limit of my endurance. After to-night, there will be no longer a shield for you in my weakness."

"Nelly, I will not believe but you are practising some jest upon me—a woman's little artifice to test your power. Come, give me back the paper, and let all be made smooth between us."

"No, Mark, I will not; it is useless to ask me. You are not dealing now with the simple, silly girl who gave her heart in such pure faith, and trusted so blindly where she loved. You have, instead, a woman sad and old before her time, who has passed through the fire and come out seared. You have helped to turn my heart to stone, and stone, you know, is not a yielding thing."

A vague dread was taking possession of Mark. He ground out his answer between his set teeth: "What has come over you, Eleanor? I do not know you like this. Is it possible that you have secured that paper to use as an instrument against me?"

"Yes, if occasion requires, and you goad me to it."

He shrank under her look, as he said, bitterly, "And you are the woman whom I was to have taken

home as my wife—a viper always ready with a sting, for I know now that you never loved me."

At last he had overthrown her calmness.

"Never loved you!" she repeated, with a shrill ring of anguish in her voice—"you whom I set up as an idol, and for whose sake I forgot my duty!"

"What else can I think, when you sit there and taunt and threaten to turn your hand against me as an enemy? If you want me to believe in your love, give me proof by doing what I ask. Save me from the ruin that is sure to follow exposure. If I claim you as my wife while my uncle lives, what will you gain, when your husband is made a beggar?"

"I do not mean to share your life," she said, proudly. "I have done with that dream, and my home is with my father, while he lives. But first, I must have justice. Acknowledge me as your wife, and confess all to your uncle."

"What! fasten the clog more firmly about my neck? Never!"

She went on rapidly, a vivid streak of crimson burning in her cheeks: "You owe it to others as well as me; for, believing you free, your uncle wishes you to become a suitor to his ward."

He started. "What tattler has been chattering these tales? Do you suppose I am wanting to marry anybody else? Ha! ha! 'Once bit, twice shy.' But seriously, you are quite mistaking my intentions. Give your promise, and leave the country, and I don't doubt but that some day I shall be able to acknowledge the fact of our marriage, and will with my own hands tear up the document I know you will be reasonable enough to give me. You see, Eleanor, my object is to make money; and I will make it in my own way. I have told you before that if my uncle knew of our relation to each other, I should be disgraced in his eyes, and there would be an end to all my hopes. What more can I tell you? Now I am sure you will be reasonable, and consent to leave the country—and never come back again, I fervently hope," he added, to himself.

He had some idea that he had only to remove the evil to some distance to get rid of it altogether. In some country of jungles and fever, casualties would happen with more frequency than in a civilised city; and, in short, he looked forward to a time, not very far distant, when he should receive news that he had been set free from his yoke by a more potent agency than it was in his power to use. In the meantime he resolved to keep his uncle quiet, by dangling after May Rivers, until that "something or other," as he vaguely shadowed it to himself, should happen, and leave him free to marry his uncle's ward; or rather (shall we say?) her money.

"I refuse to do as you wish," said Eleanor, at length.

"And the paper?"

"I keep, to use if occasion requires."

"Eleanor, you must be going mad! Don't you see that you are driving me to desperation?"

His livid lips were quivering, and his hands clutching together with a nervous, restless action. He was calculating the chances of a physical struggle, looking at the white throat, and longing to grapple for victory with the weak woman's strength.

At that moment the click of a latch-key was heard at the front door.

"Here comes that old fool; he seems fated to be always dogging me like a spy. Ah——"

He drew a long breath, as he uttered the interjection, for he saw that Eleanor had fainted. Excitement and over-wrought feeling had done its work.

Now was his opportunity. If Giles Royton would only get into difficulties with the latch-key, or meet with any other friendly obstruction that would delay his entrance for a few seconds, he would be able to regain possession of the paper without trouble or noise.

"Ah! now I'll be able to secure it," he muttered, fumbling with the fastening of her dress, and feeling for the paper.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MEETING IN THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

THERE was a brilliant gathering in the rooms of the Royal Academy's exhibition, which presented an animated scene, exciting not only to the charmed circle of art-worshippers, but the good-humoured, well-dressed crowd that progressed along the allotted space with considerable energy, breaking into groups before certain favourite pictures, admiring, dissecting, and prattling art-phrases with inexpressible relish. The patrons of art had mustered strongly, and the professional world was well represented, as also was the realm of beauty and fashion.

The throng was at its height, when our old friend, Daniel Crawton, might have been seen making a tour of the rooms, his face wearing a pleasant, relaxed look, that softened all its rugged lines. Perhaps it was called out by the consciousness of his novel position on that sunny afternoon; for he had two ladies under his charge, and was piloting them carefully through the crowd. They were his ward, May Rivers, and her aunt Lydia. Their appearance excited attention, and some speculative whispers followed them as they passed. The dignified spinster, with her air of quaint antiquity, presented a striking contrast to the vision of young beauty at her side; for May Rivers, in her fresh, crisp muslin, with the vapoury shawl of black lace falling lightly round her, and the dainty little bonnet, with its simple wreath of forget-me-nots nestling among the glossy coils of dark hair, looked attractive enough to excuse the many glances of admiration directed to her.

"Dear, May, this—this crowd is almost too much for me," faltered the spinster, looking appealingly at her niece.

Daniel Crawton caught the words, and said, with visible apprehension, "My dear madam, I hope you are not troubled with delicate nerves; for a fainting woman is one of my horrors. I am just thinking that I ought to have resigned this office to my nephew. He would have made a better squire of dames, for it is more in his way. And I don't doubt but you would have approved such an alteration in our programme, Miss May."

The young lady did not answer, for her attention was at that moment preoccupied.

He shrugged his shoulders, and whispered a good-humoured aside to himself: "Only what I might have expected; the usual fate of old men's speeches. I really ought to have given them over to Mark."

"My, dear," whispered dignified Miss Lydia, "I am afraid you have not been attending to what your guardian was saying. Why do you stare at those people in front; don't you know, May, that it is shockingly vulgar for a young lady?"

"Yes, aunt," murmured the girl, pouting her red lips. "If I am not well up in the proprieties, there has been an alarming waste of your wisdom and Miss Beckfield's, for you both laboured hard to make me a proper young lady; if you have not succeeded, the fault must be that of the pupil. Hush! let Mr. Crawton get absorbed in his catalogue, this is not for his ears. Well, aunt, to give you a reason for my vulgarity, I was attracted by a face, or rather, two faces; and, don't be shocked, one of them was that of a young man. I fancy they are brother and sister."

Aunt Lydia uttered an interjection of dismay, and strained her short-sighted eyes in the direction indicated by her niece.

"There, aunt, you are looking at the wrong group. I mean that tall, queenly girl in the grey dress, with the straw bonnet and white ribbons, simple enough for a quakeress; but you should see her face; it is like that of some beautiful Greek statue. Whoever she is, I should like to know her. As for the young man, her brother or cousin," she added, with an arch glance at her guardian, "I am undecided what to say about him, except that he looks as if he would be well able to take care of any one he liked."

At that moment Daniel Crawton turned round, saying, "Found at last! Now, ladies, I must hurry you on; for here is something that I particularly wish to show you before we leave—an unpretending little gem by an artist not yet known to fame."

A few more turns, and a little energetic elbowing, soon brought them to a corner, where a knot of connoisseurs were discussing the merits of a small painting, which occupied a very modest place, but had won its meed of recognition, as was testified by

the cabalistic little red cross in the corner, which indicated that it had been already purchased. Daniel Crawton pointed it out to the ladies, and placed them in the best position which he could obtain for the light, then fell back and studied it in silence. He was a warm and appreciative admirer of art, and though his busy mercantile life had allowed him little leisure for the cultivation of his taste, it still remained the one favourite hobby which he allowed himself to mount as relaxation from business.

The picture which had attracted him was no brilliant effect of colour, and rather disappointed Aunt Lydia, who had no idea of drawing, and was always puzzled to discover the difference between one artist and another. She murmured, "Very pretty, my dear," and gazed at it steadfastly, through her spectacles, until her eyes ached, and she registered a fervent wish that there were no more pictures to be looked at that afternoon.

But May Rivers had caught the painter's meaning. She said nothing in answer to her aunt's comment, but her dark face glowed and her great eyes became suffused. The artist had chosen one of the commonest incidents of everyday life, investing it with homely pathos, and translating with the hand of a master the "touch of nature that makes the whole earth kin."

The picture represented a field-path on a hot summer's day, with a pleasant glimpse of a church peeping through the trees in the distance, so truthfully rendered that one might almost fancy the feel of the crisp, dry leaves in the stirless air, and see the languid droop of the thirsty daisies trying to hide, in the parched grass, from the blinding glare of sunlight.

But the chief interest of the picture lay in the figures that occupied the fore-ground—a wayworn outcast and his wife resting under a tree. They seemed to have just turned aside from the dusty high road, and dropped down, unable to pursue their weary tramp. The man looked haggard and ill, and the woman was supporting his head, her eyes full of a tender, wistful anxiety, that made her sad, patient face a study, and gave touching suggestiveness to the title, "For Weal or Woe." One felt that she had cast in her lot with the poor fellow until death, and that no amount of rough hardship could kill the woman's love within her. May drew a long breath as she gazed; her guardian had given the signal for them to pass on, but she still lingered before the picture, her heart speaking in her eyes.

"This realises an idea of my own," she breathed in a whisper, meant only for Aunt Lydia; "I have dreamed of such love; it would make even poverty seem wealth."

Daniel Crawton was her listener, as well as the gentle spinster; and it was his sternly-sounding voice that answered, not unkindly, in spite of its cynical tone—

"Nonsense, child; many other dreamers have dreamed those dreams, and woke to disappointment. Wait till you are older, and the world has taught you some of its wisdom. You will find life too busy and real to feed such romantic fancies."

"Then I shall have learned to hate both the world and its wisdom," retorted May, with a decisive curl of her lips.

Miss Lydia did not venture an opinion, but looked in dismay at her niece. She was apprehensive that the conversation would lead to one of the word-contests which were not unfrequent between bold, outspoken May and her guardian. Here there was a momentary block in the brilliant throng. They were obliged to pause, and a little incident occurred which at once diverted the young lady's attention.

Something caught the skirt of her dress, and at the same instant a voice said, hastily, "I beg your pardon."

It was a full manly voice, with a pleasant tone of courtesy, that gave a grace even to the commonplace words. She looked up quickly, and, to her confusion, caught the fixed gaze of a pair of handsome eyes. They belonged to a face which she recognised for its likeness to the pale beauty in the soft grey dress, whose face had so strongly impressed itself on her memory.

"Those two are brother and sister," she decided mentally, then checked herself, and blushed at her own promptness in fixing their relationship.

At that moment the voice of her guardian happily created a diversion, and covered her embarrassment. Daniel Crawton had turned round and caught sight of Hugh. The result was a bow of respectful recognition on the part of the young man, and from his uncle a cordial "Good morning, Hugh. Glad to see you here. I did not know you had a taste for the fine arts."

Hugh's face flushed with pleasure. There was a marked change in the merchant's manner—something that vividly recalled the night of their first meeting, and the memorable incident with which it was associated. There was a gracious unbending from the habitual reserve of the man of business—no longer the stately courtesy of the principal of the firm, but the easy cordiality of a friend, not too far above his junior to be interested in his movements.

Then came the introductions: "My nephew, Hugh Crawton—my ward, Miss Rivers."

There was nothing to excite attention in that simple form of words, yet it was to mark the meeting-point in the currents of two lives; for even then Providence was busily interweaving the threads of their future, though they met and parted as strangers, who might never again be thrown in each other's way. And Daniel Crawton, with his secretly-cherished plans for the happiness of Mark Danson and May Rivers, how little did he guess what would follow the apparently trifling incident of that chance meet-

ing between two whom he would not have associated even in thought!

May's look expressed surprise at the discovery of the relationship between her guardian and the handsome young stranger. But her mind was quick in receiving and adjusting facts. This, then, was Mark Danson's cousin, the clerk, who belonged to that branch of the Crawton family who had been so unfortunate.

She had a vague remembrance of having heard something about his admission into the counting-house. "I will question Mr. Mark Danson, the next time I see him; then I can learn all that I wish to know." This was the resolution which she made to herself, unconscious that she would be helping to foster the deadly growth of jealousy and hate, which was already poisoning the mind of the cousin whom fortune had favoured.

They were now joined by Margaret Crawton and her friend, whom Hugh introduced as Mr. Marston. The keen grey eyes of the old merchant were fastened on Margaret's face, until the conscious colour flushed her pale cheeks, and her eyelids quivered and fell under his earnest gaze.

"And this is my niece, whom I have not seen since she was a child," he said, absently; adding, under his breath, "Beauty, but not like hers; the boy has more of the mother's look."

The pressure of the crowd made it impossible for the group to linger long. A few minutes more, and they had parted to go their separate ways, the brother and sister, and the young artist, to continue their inspection of the pictures, lingering in the charmed atmosphere until the rooms rapidly thinned, and it was time to think of home.

"Marston, let me congratulate you on your suc-

cess," whispered Hugh, his face glowing with enthusiasm. 'Weal or Woe' is a triumph, and deserves to make your name as an artist. My uncle and his party paid more attention to that picture than to any in the exhibition. I felt proud of you, old fellow, but disappointed that you would not let me introduce you as the artist; your modesty goes too far."

Charles Marston laughed, and returned the pressure of his friend's hand with compound interest.

In the meantime Daniel Crawton's brougham was far on its way to Broombank, where Miss Rivers and her aunt were going to dine. Taking advantage of her guardian's prolonged reverie, impulsive May put her bright face close to the old lady's, and whispered, "Aunt Lydia, did you ever see a lovelier face than that girl Margaret's? I shall dream of her to-night. If I could only have her for a friend! An uncle who deliberately neglects such a niece is nothing more than an insensible iceberg, and I should like to tell him so."

To which the aunt responded with an apprehensive glance towards the opposite side of the carriage, and a warning "Hush! my dear."

At the same time, a whispered discussion of another kind was going on in the omnibus where Hugh Crawton and his sister had taken their seats.

"Well, Madge, at last you have realised one of your wishes—seen and spoken to Uncle Daniel. What do you think of him?"

"I cannot tell you at once, Hugh, only that I am sure I should like him, if I came to know him better; but I could not bear to displease him, or forfeit his respect."

"Right, Margaret; neither could I," said Hugh, becoming suddenly grave.

(To be continued.)

NURSERIES.

IT would be curious to inquire what a poor child's idea of a nursery might be. Something very vague and dreamlike, we may be sure—a strip of fairy-land, peopled with wondrous, unattainable toys, and shaded by forests of Christmas trees. The poor little urchin has never known anything that would help him in his guesses. The very name is an inscrutable mystery, so he is obliged to draw upon his imagination, supplemented by such help as may be derived from pastry-cooks' shops with their Twelfth-day cakes and holiday decorations. A nursery is to him purely a fancy picture. How can it be otherwise? His naked little feet were never heard to patter within the walls of that homely room, and his sole idea of nurses is drawn from a neighbouring hospital, where he was taken to see his father with a broken leg. No nursery for

him. The pavement and gutter were the earliest scenes of his earthly joys, while the many-coloured bottles in a chemist's window inspired him with a rapturous kind of reverential awe for the beautiful in art. How should the poor little fellow know better? It is not his fault that he is the youngest of seven, and that his father is only a bricklayer's labourer with fifteen shillings a-week. By the time that a slice of bread and dripping has been served out all round, there is very little left to spend on nursery comforts. A doll without a head, and a fragmentary Noah's ark—the gift of a kindly district visitor—constitute a treasure of amusement which is as unfailing as it is superb. In company with these accessories of enjoyment, our little friend is allowed by his mother to keep solemn state in the passage on washing-days, where, besides indulging in a little cheerful re-

creation in an atmosphere of soap-suds, he may also improve his constitution by judicious exposure to a cutting draught. But what are coughs and colds compared with the precious playthings on the clammy floor? Besides, the children of the poor are supposed to be possessed of special capabilities for "roughing" it; and it is to be hoped that the popular conception represents a fact. Very likely it does, for common honesty compels an impartial spectator to admit that the process of infantine training does full justice to their reputed powers of endurance. To say that they are *dragged* up would be much nearer the truth than the more honied phrase of *brought* up. The fact that a fair proportion of their number survive this favourite mode of infant treatment, may be accepted as a pleasing testimony to the toughness of the national fibre under somewhat unpropitious circumstances, though it can hardly be recommended for general adoption. So far, however, we have reason for congratulation. Our children live through it, and that is something. Look, for example, at the besotted mother standing under the flaring gas-light of a gin-shop, and grasping a tattered bundle that might be anything, but will one day probably be a draggled slattern like herself; or look at that tramping woman, who is exciting the pity of belated passengers on a rainy night by doubling after them with a wailing infant in her arms. It speaks well for their vitality when children do live out this treatment. But putting aside any possible mischief that may happen to their bodies from exposure and rough handling, it is easy to see that the effect upon their minds must be immediate and decisive. An infancy commenced in this way is pretty sure to ripen into a childhood of infamy and crime; and the absence of all home feeling turns them into the precocious little Arabs that perplex our philanthropists and fill our prisons. It is very sad; but what can be expected? If a child is taught that the streets are its natural home, and that it is at liberty to scour them night and day for a subsistence, and if, moreover, it comes to see that a corner of a dry arch is as comfortable a sleeping-place as his drunken father's cheerless room, he will speedily turn his knowledge to account by snatching such forbidden pleasures as an evil destiny may throw in his way.

So much has of late been done for children of larger growth, in the way of refuges, trainingships, industrial and ragged schools, and the like, that the moment seems auspicious for descending to a lower level of our social life, and thinking of what may be contrived for our baby population. A glance at the ragged little urchins that crawl and tumble about the alleys of our larger towns, will be enough to show that, while the infants

of the poorer classes are left to shift for themselves, a fruitful harvest of crime and misery is being sown. Listen to that group of babies who are playing in the mud. The oldest of them can be scarcely six, and the tiniest of the number, who can hardly speak plainly, is stringing together imprecations that might make a hoary sinner blush. Of course he does not understand what he is saying. How can he? It is merely the force of imitative habit. He hears his elders use these words, and bad association is turning him into a foul blasphemer before he can run, and a year or two more of the alley will make him something worse.

One of the many evils of poverty is, that parents with the very best intentions often find it hard to shield their little ones from harm. Bad companionship in the streets is too strong for the most careful training indoors. That mothers who wish to go from home and earn a day's wages by washing find it next to impossible to provide for the safety of their younger children, is a fact that must be well known to all persons who are familiar with the habits of the poor. The usual practice is to club two or three babies together, and leave them in charge of a girl of about seven years of age. Thus, then, while the mother is working away to earn her shilling, the little ones at home are allowed unlimited liberty to roam about the streets, to play in the gutter, to tumble down areas, to be run over by cabs, to be kicked and cuffed by their elders, to be deposited at breezy corners, while their keeper refreshes herself with her skipping-rope, or a sociable game at hop-skotch—to set themselves on fire when they return to dinner, and to scald themselves to death in a futile attempt to drink out of the tea-kettle. When to these contingencies—so hard for a poor mother to guard against—are added exposure to rain and cold, irregular and insufficient food, such as bits of stale bread, badly-cooked fish, or flabby vegetables, and defective clothing, we get such a picture of infant life among the poor as may well make persons of more comfortable means thank Heaven that they are able to find food and shelter for their little ones.

All this is bad—very bad, and the evil can only be remedied by nurseries. Not such fairy-like creations as the imagination of a roving urchin of the streets may picture, but good home-like establishments that answer in some degree to the endearing name. The want has long been recognised in France, and the *crèche* (or manger) has for many years been a familiar feature of every large town. The institution is subsidised by Government, and mothers are glad enough to leave their little ones within its hospitable shelter. A somewhat similar experiment has been tried in this country by some Roman Catholic ladies, and the results are said to exceed

the most sanguine expectations of their founders. We trust that Protestants will not neglect the little ones of their own faith, nor allow them to be absorbed by the institutions which the zealous supporters of Roman Catholicism have founded. Why, as long as every large town counts its babies by hundreds, should there not be a well-ordered nursery to attract the little ones to its kindly shelter?

Where several independent establishments are working for the common good, it would be invidious to select one as an object of special commendation. It will be enough to point out the general purpose that they are set on foot to attain. The main idea is to afford a home during the day hours—say from seven in the morning till seven in the evening—for the children of the industrious poor. The age of candidates for admission ranges from one month to six years. On arrival in the morning, the infant has his own clothes taken off and tied up in a bundle, which is labelled with his name or nursery number. This is a necessary precaution, in an establishment where cleanliness must always be one of the reigning features. This done, the child is carefully washed and combed by an experienced nurse, after which he is ushered into a large and well-ventilated room, plentifully supplied with picture books and toys, where he finds himself in company with twenty or thirty little fellows of his own class.

And do they like it? A child who has known nothing but the disorder of a crowded home may, for an hour or two, be rather shy in the presence of such well-devised appliances for his comfort; or he may bewail his mother who has just left him at the door, and tax the patience of his nurses by querulous lamentations; but these minor difficulties soon wear away, and a few days' acquaintance with nursery associations, makes him as contented and tractable as the rest.

The attendants are, as a rule, models of gentleness and forbearance, and are not promoted to the charge of children till their capabilities have been subjected to the severest scrutiny. They are often widows of tradesmen, or of professional men who have died without leaving a provision for their families; and to a woman who is really fond of children, and has lost some little ones of her own, it would be hard to find a more beautiful retreat.

A regular chronicle of the day's work is kept—how many children are entered, the ages and residence of their parents, the expense of keep, and other special matters. This is inspected by lady visitors, who attend in turn, and who agree to spend so many hours of every day within the nursery walls.

Meal times come round with edifying punctuality, and the effect of wholesome food, administered at proper times, works a wonderful change upon

children who have hitherto known little else than the conventional system of "roughing" it.

Sickness is, of course, a risk to which an institution of this kind is specially liable. Measles, whooping-cough, or scarlatina, may be imported at any moment; and the rocklessness of parents, who are eager to dispose of their children for the day, makes visitations of this kind more common than they ought to be; but the constant visits of an experienced physician ensure prompt attention to every form of youthful ailment. The first symptom of illness consigns the infant to an adjoining hospital, which is set apart for children, and where the parents have the option of leaving him, free of charge, till the cure is complete.

But are not children occasionally left altogether? It is a natural question; and it was at one time feared that the number of deserted infants would prove a serious hindrance to the usefulness of the work. But inquiry at a nursery in a crowded neighbourhood, which has a bad police-character for baby-murder and the like, establishes the fact, that during the period of two years which has elapsed since its foundation, not a single child has been left on its hands. The infants are brought in the morning, and are regularly fetched at night. The only real difficulty has been when a drunken mother has arrived to carry away her child, who has been carefully tended in the nursery all day, to a gin-shop or dancing-room; but, happily, cases like this are by no means common.

And do the parents value the nursery? That, of course, depends upon what sort of people the parents are. Many, no doubt, object, just as they object to vaccination and every other sanitary measure that has been devised for their good. But a fair proportion of mothers see in these institutions a real and substantial help. They bring their little ones to the door with confidence, and cheerfully allow that their improved appearance is due to wholesome food and careful nursing. A trifling payment—in some cases as low even as a penny a day—puts the benefits of the institution within easy reach of all, who, if they pause to reflect, will find that the maintenance of a child at home will cost them fully double as much as the nursery demands. This, it must be felt, is beginning the work of social reform at the right end. A child who has been a regular attendant at an establishment of this kind, will, in due course, be drafted off to school. Humanising influences will have been brought to bear upon him, at an age when he is most susceptible of good impressions; and if our thoroughfares are not altogether purged of their tribes of little Arabs, something, at least, will have been done for those parents, who may desire a better fate for their young children than the pavement and the gutters. R. S.

THE GROWTH OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

BY THE REV. JOHN STOUGHTON.

II.—THE EAR.



FROM "blade to ear" is a process of growth. Let us look at the fact in general, and at this stage of the process in particular.

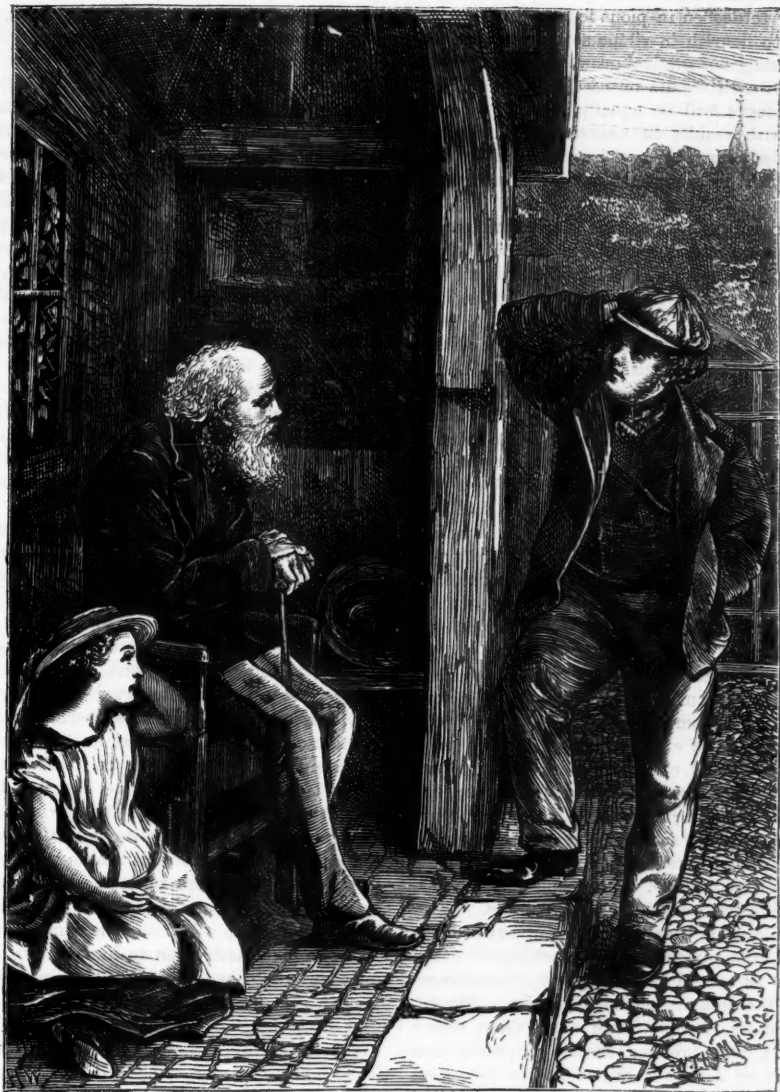
The first chapter of Genesis describes the era of creation, when man appeared at once in the completeness, beauty, strength, and grace of his manhood. The idea conveyed, with regard to plants, is that they also were created perfect. "The earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind." The creative era has long since passed away. From that period until now has been an era of development. Nature, providence, man, society, civilisation, the Church, and the economy of grace, all have been, and are, subjects and examples of development. There is, indeed, a sense in which it may be said, that the first moment of spiritual life in the soul of man is a period of creation; "for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" "we are created anew in Christ Jesus." A supernatural, wonderful change then takes place. The Divine Spirit then communicates that which is the germ of our whole subsequent spiritual life; but ever after the process is one of growth.

Cases may occur in which the moral improvement of the human being, under the power of divine grace, is exceedingly rapid. God, sometimes, makes short work in mercy, as well as in judgment; and we are filled with grateful astonishment at the sudden ripening of Christian character. The heirs of grace are with a surprising rapidity made meet for their inheritance; but commonly the progress is slow—very slow. As we watch the history of Christian habits in the life of our fellow-believers, as we note spiritual experience in ourselves, we are, as a rule, struck with the gradual nature of the whole thing; and this fact is just what we might expect from the general method of divine procedure, which can afford to wait—which makes good its journey onward step by step—which mocks the hot impatience of mankind. Moreover, if we look at human nature, human circumstances, and human history, we see reasons why spiritual growth cannot be hasty. The nature on which grace has to work is degenerate, wilful, and full of obstinacy; the temptations which beset us are manifold; the situation in which we find ourselves placed, in the present world, is, in many respects, most unfavourable. The first great change wrought in us by the truth and Spirit of God, though a new creation, was but

rudimentary—but initiative of a better state of things, to work its way through obstacles. Much as may have been attained already, more remains to be attained hereafter. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." The number and elevation of the steps to be climbed, in order to reach the topmost stair of Christian excellence, are difficult and formidable, as well as inviting: "Add to your faith virtue [or courage]; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Perhaps each of these graces in thorough practice will be found harder to perfect than the preceding.

Very marked are the advantages of gradual advancement. We notice this as we watch the growth of a child up to the stage of manhood. It is a gliding, by gentle movement, from point to point; an ever-deepening hue of life, like the colours of the sky when the clouds become more and more richly crimson, more and more gloriously purple. We are thinking now of intellectual, moral progress, and we cannot but observe what benefits arise from this in the experience of human beings. Let us compare ourselves in this respect with Adam, who, in his unique, exceptional history, missed the successive stages of infancy, and childhood, and youth. Have not we the advantage over him? Have not we pleasant memories, and an enrichment of mind, and a breadth of sympathy, and an experience of many things which he could not have had? For we have passed through a strengthening and ripening process, the loss of which could scarcely be compensated for by any miraculous inspiration of knowledge. As a tree includes all former growths in its last, as ring after ring of vegetable life in the heart of the oak engirdles all its predecessors, so man in his maturity contains within himself all the thoughts, feelings, and experiences which have arisen within him from his infancy upwards; and what treasures of knowledge, and of usefulness, and of joy, as well as of sorrow, they prove, no one who reflects can fail to discover.

And so with spiritual life. We can conceive of gracious operations in the soul being cut short by one wonder-stroke of maturing energy,—the child in Christ being made at once a man, all intermediate experience superseded; but we cannot conceive of this abridgment of the divine economy as otherwise than involving a loss to the character



(Drawn by H. WOODS.)

"To seat him by the toll-house door,
To hear the gossip, join the laugh."—p. 540.

of him whose sanctification should be thus compendiously disposed of. Better far, gradually to advance, and slowly and by degrees, and with time for reflection and digestion to pick up knowledge; better far to deepen in pious feeling from day to day, and to flourish in virtue season after season. The advantages of gradual growth are apparent in connection with results on earth; we apprehend the advantages will be equally apparent in connection with results in heaven: for, doubtless, what we daily learn by experience here, often painful, will yield rich, ripe harvest in the immortal future.

The necessity of spiritual growth is obvious. If the blade stops as it is, and never becomes the ear, it dies. Continued life involves continued growth. The arrest of growth is death. So with spiritual goodness. We here come upon one of the commonplaces of practical divinity. It is not on that account to be passed hastily over. A new thought needs to be detained, that it may be tested, that one may see what is in it, whether it be worth enough to warrant our passing it on, and giving sanction to its currency. An old thought is sure to have in it something good, or it would not have been preserved, and used, and passed on from hand to hand so long. Its familiarity indicates its value. Now the adage, that we spiritually live only so long as we spiritually grow, is worth re-impressing upon our memory. It amounts to this: we must improve, or endeavour to improve, in the culture and practice of true godliness, or cease to retain anything more than a name to live.

And improvement is a very broad thing—a very deep thing; it comprehends the whole of our moral conduct, the entire range of our daily life; our going out and our coming in; what we are abroad and what we are at home; our acts; our motives; our words; our thoughts; our tempers; our dispositions; our achievements; our endeavours; our faith; our prayers. We must improve in these respects on the whole, or our spiritual life will decline; in plain words, our souls will die.

These thoughts about growth can but produce in conscientious people great searchings of heart. And here let us add a word by way of encouragement to the honest-minded Christian. Whilst, in some cases, we may think more about means than ends, and mistake means for ends, and use means as if they were ends, when they have little or no value whatever apart from results, yet here as we dwell upon this subject of growth in grace, we may think more about the end than we need, and less of the means than we ought. Some pious persons are not conscious of attaining the end which they seek, but they are conscious of making endeavours—i.e., conscious of spiritual aspiration, self-control, constant effort. They say to them-

selves, "We do not get on, somehow; we make no way; wind and tide are against us; we are being constantly driven back." But however discouraging in this respect their experience may seem, they cannot but feel that they strive, labour, even agonise, to be better than they are.

Such persons should take courage from the fact that they are employing the *means*, although they cannot see that they are at present attaining the *end*. Whether we are actually improving is never a point very clear to ourselves; but we can all give an answer to the plain inquiry, "*Do we try?*" For our comfort, it ought to be sufficient, that we are conscious we do thoughtfully, earnestly, and perseveringly *try*. The husbandman has more to do with the sowing than the growing; with tilling the field and putting in the seed, than with the blade becoming the ear: and we venture to add, that we have more to do with trying to improve, than with actual improvement; with honestly using the means, than with triumphantly reaching the end. Our notion of actual improvement may not be the same as the divine idea of it. We may want peace, comfort, joy; He may see that conflict, trouble, and disappointment may be better for us.

Really we often, in the highest sense, improve when we do not think we do: we fancy we are growing worse, simply because we see more of our defects and infirmities, which in itself is an advantage; and if we strive to overcome these evils, with difficulty and sorrow, we increase in humility, repentance, and trust. And when following after some specific grace—faith, patience, forgiveness, purity, or the like—perhaps we imagine that our movement is backward, not forward; yet, though it so appears to us, it does not so appear to others, who may be better judges of us than we are of ourselves. In rowing against the stream in tempestuous weather, the boatman may be dispirited, as if not making headway at all; whereas observers on the shore see that every pull is telling on the progress of the barque. The getting on of a boy at school may be more visible to his master than to himself: so many a Christian who takes most discouraging views of his own case, may be greatly improving in the sight of the holy angels and the blessed God.

It is time, for a moment, to notice the particular stage of growth, specified in the part of the parable, now before us, "then the ear." The ear is a great improvement upon the blade, yet it is a point, in vegetable life, short of "the full corn in the ear." It relates to a middle era of experience. Perhaps we find a parallel in the words of St. John, where, after writing to little children (babes of Christ, whose sins were forgiven for his sake)—after writing to fathers in Christ (because they had known the Father in

heaven, who is from the beginning), he addresses young men in Christ, saying, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The youths in Christ who have passed the stage of spiritual childhood—who are touching maturity, may be regarded as spiritually equivalent to "the ear" which can no longer be mistaken for the blade.

There are certain perils which increase around the plant, as it grows. A parasitic fungus sometimes fastens on grain, at a particular stage, and blasts it; the whole ear is converted into what the farmer calls *smut*—one of his greatest horrors. When the Apostle John says to the young men, "Ye have overcome the wicked one," he suggests the idea that the conflict and danger are pre-eminently great in the case of those who have just passed the first stage in spiritual life. Then comes the strongest temptation, the fiercest fight—then is the hardest struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. And after an assurance of victory, "because ye are strong" (not in yourselves) only because "the word of God abideth in you"—(Christ the Word abiding in the children of God by his truth and Spirit)—the apostle adds the pertinent exhortation, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." As little children have not reached this middle crisis in the conflict, so the fathers have passed it. And now, in this hottest hour of spiritual strife—in the hour oftenest decisive of the whole future, the soldier of the cross is put upon his sorest trial for victory, for honour, for life.

We would glance, finally, at the cause and conditions of this growth in grace.

The cause is to be found only in God. It is said, "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself," by which is meant that the mysterious increase of the plant is independent of human power, skill, care. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." One "plants," another "waters, God giveth the increase"—the Almighty "blesseth the springing thereof." The wheat—the mustard-seed growth up under God; so does a child's life, the life of its body, the life of its soul. We cannot entertain a second thought upon these familiar subjects, without recognising in them that mystery of life and growth upon which we have already dwelt—a mystery which necessarily involves the fact of God's power and blessing being underneath, and above these natural pro-

cesses from first to last; and the thought serves to bring out into impressive distinctness the fact that God is the author of spiritual life, and the cause of all its advancement. We are apt to imagine that if spiritual life be once inspired, it is all we need; that if God once creates us "anew in Christ Jesus," we can take care of ourselves ever afterwards. But the fact is that we require not only a renewal at the first—not only the new birth of the Holy Spirit at the beginning, but a renewing "day by day." The Psalmist says, "Thou renewest the face of the earth." The miraculous creation at the beginning did not supersede this necessity to the end. The plain and most important lesson on this part of our subject is, that we are constantly dependent on the Spirit of God.

The farmer may never think of God. He may take the growth of grain in his fields as a matter of course, and the corn may not grow the worse for it; but the case is different in relation to the work of grace; and the ground of the difference is apparent. The growth in one case is physical, in the other it is spiritual. The growth in one case is in an outward thing, apart from us, fixed in the ground yonder; the growth, in the other case, is in ourselves, in our own minds and hearts; a growth involving the discipline and the improvement of a conscious, intelligent, moral nature. Spiritual improvement depends upon what we think; what we do; what we purpose; what we endeavour; what we ask; what we seek. Our experience, then, must be brought into unison with our divine position, and our divine relationship. We are dependent upon God for grace; without him we *can do*, we *can be*, nothing; and our consciousness must take form accordingly. We must rely for daily grace, for daily strength, for daily growth, on him who "hath given us of his Spirit."

Adverting again to the imagery of the parable, we may observe that there are at least four things essential to the growth of wheat—*light; heat; air; changes of weather*. The corn will not grow in darkness, without the sun. No artificial illumination will make up for the want of the orb of day. Nor can it dispense with spring warmth and summer sultriness. No process of warming by any mechanical apparatus suffices for our fields; neither can the plant thrive when it is walled in or screened from the invigorating breeze, from the constantly circulating atmosphere. Even the sleet, and the snow, and the storm, as well as the gentle rain, serve a purpose, amongst the manifold departments of God's natural economy.

The spiritual suggestions offered by these simple facts are applicable to us all. If we would grow in grace, we must avail ourselves of the light of Holy Scripture; we must open our minds to receive

more and more of its incomparable instructions. The study of the Bible stands foremost amongst the means of our spiritual improvement. If we would grow in grace, we must catch the rays of the Sun of Righteousness—that is, we must yield up ourselves to the blessed influence of Christ's invitations promises and encouragements, which make his life and teaching so attractive, so animating, so inspiring, so cheering to every one who loves to cherish his divine words.

If we would grow in grace, we must lay bare our souls, spiritually expose them by faith, meditation, and prayer to the Holy Spirit of God, which, as "the wind, bloweth where it listeth;"—His

grace, unlike the natural wind, will set in with a favouring welcome current, towards those who, in earnest, cry, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

If we would grow in grace, we must patiently and cheerfully resign ourselves to the discipline of Providence; we must be prepared for the night as well as the day, for the storm as well as the sunshine, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

EARTH'S LOVE-GUEST.

WHEN Spring some moons ago came down
Our western slopes with gleeful trip,
Dame Earth relaxed her wintry frown,
And met the maiden lip to lip.

All Nature felt the fond embrace,
A low sweet music filled the air,
And joy and beauty, love and grace,
Burst into being everywhere.

The weird old forest trees began
To don the garb of youth again,
And flowers, the truest friends of man,
Came crowding out by wood and lane.

And wandering minstrels to our isle
Came flocking, an harmonious throng,
Love's twilight moments to beguile
With mystical, melodious song.

Then from his hermitage once more
Old Age stole, leaning on his staff,
To seat him by the toll-house door,
To hear the gossip, join the laugh.

And youngers, that could scarcely run,
Found in the meads unbounded wealth—

Gathered their blossoms, made their fun,
And garrisoned their frames with health.

The time of flowers swiftly went,
And fruitage ripened 'neath the eye,
Till the fair ears all bowed and bent,
Bespoke the day of harvest night.

Then garner's ope'd, and stacks upgrew,
The sportsman's voice soon echoed wide,
And poor puss heard the loud halloo,
And fled her form with panting side.

Now wax the skies as black as lead,
And bitter winds come bellowing round,
The voiceful birds are mute or fled,
And hoar-frosts lie upon the ground.

But blacker, bleaker still shall grow
The nights and days, and fiercer still
The discontented winds shall blow,
And buffet tree, and tower, and hill,

Ere she again of azure eyes
Shall, scattering Eden essences,
Bid from their winter graves arise
Earth's brightest, purest presences.

JOHN G. WATTS.

INDIAN SUPERSTITIONS.



UNTIL within the last few years a practice prevailed in many rural districts in the Madras Presidency, which takes us back to the times when the Israelites caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Moloch. The custom was probably handed down from the aboriginal tribes, to whose gross idolatry the monotheistic Aryans were more or less perverted wherever they settled in scanty numbers. It had long been discountenanced, how-

ever, by the Hindoos of the upper classes, who repudiated the idea of its being sanctioned by their religion, and ridiculed its efficacy either as a propitiation or as a thanks-offering. In olden times the ceremony was, no doubt, invested with a certain degree of pomp and circumstance, but it had gradually fallen off into a tame and unmeaning spectacle.

In most instances a shallow trench, varying in different places from six inches to two feet in depth, and from three to five yards in width, was

filled with twigs of the tamarind-tree and light bushwood, and when this was reduced to embers the devotees walked or ran across. Now and then, indeed, it chanced that a man or boy would trip and fall among the live charcoal, and so receive grievous burns, which occasionally proved fatal; but such accidents as these were of rare occurrence, and it is stated that the performers usually besmeared their feet and legs with some preparation that rendered them callous to the heat. It is certain that they seldom appeared to suffer any inconvenience from the seemingly perilous ordeal.

Walking through fire was one of the regular performances at particular festivals in honour of the old aboriginal deities, though confined entirely to the very lowest class of the community. It generally took place in fulfilment of vows made in sickness or distress, and not unfrequently proxies were hired for a few shillings to discharge the obligation. At times, excited by the noisy music and the shoutings of the assembled throng, from fifty to a hundred individuals, very often under the influence of bhang, would follow one another in rapid succession, like boys on a slide, running or hopping over the embers, sending up showers of sparks into the air, and extorting exclamations of wonder and admiration from the rude and ignorant spectators. Sometimes, too, with a view to increase the attractiveness of the spectacle, regular professional performers would run slender bits of iron, three or four inches in length, through their tongues, eyelids, and fleshy parts of the arm, and attach to either end a cotton wick, which they set on fire. In other cases they would form a circle about the pit, and begin by walking slowly round and round, gradually quickening their pace, and at last, in a state of real or simulated frenzy, jumping in and out until the fire was extinguished. In these instances the performers took the precaution of previously soaking in water the cotton cloth round their loins, which constituted their full and entire dress.

Strange to say, even the Mahometans had in some places adopted this idolatrous rite, though entirely opposed to the teachings of the Koran—evil example proving, as usual, more potent than precept. At the present day, however, public opinion has triumphed over tradition, and it is only in remote villages and at comparatively long intervals that this absurdity is ever perpetrated.

A kindred folly is the Swinging Festival, which is celebrated, not only in out-of-the-way parts, but in

the very suburbs of Calcutta. It is, in truth, a disgusting sight, though rarely attended with danger, or even with much pain to the performers. A tall, stout post, or trunk of a tree, is firmly planted in the ground, to the top of which bamboo poles are fastened so as to revolve like a merry-go-round. Attached to the end of these poles are iron hooks which are passed through the muscles in the sides or on the back of the wretched performers, who are usually more than half intoxicated. Sometimes, indeed, they take it more easily, and are simply suspended by a rope tied round the waist, or they sit astride upon a piece of wood, or in a basket, and are thus whirled round high over the heads of the people, upon whom they scatter flowers. A hideous uproar is all the time going on, the monotonous beat of the tom-tom and the shrill cries of the crowd making horrible discord.

The performers are for the most part pariahs or outcasts, who are paid from two to eight shillings each for submitting to the uncomfortable operation. Mr. T. D. Lushington, in his official report on the Swinging Festival as celebrated in Masulipatam, states that it was usually held in time of famine, cholera, or other public calamity, goats, sheep, pigs, fowls, and even male buffaloes being slaughtered at the same time. It was also practised in fulfilment of vows, but through the agency of low-caste proxies. On one occasion, in Canara, Mr. Lushington witnessed a combination of swinging with a large slaughter of animals. "The pole," he says, "was erected in the close vicinity of a high heap of reeking heads, which was constantly receiving additions. Visitors had come from all the villages in the neighbourhood. All the men, women, and children were in holiday dresses; hundreds of the latter of all ages were brought close to the heap of heads, and many, who were somewhat frightened at first, became accustomed to it, and at last showed intense excitement and enjoyment in witnessing the struggles of the dying animals, or in hearing their shrieks. I can scarcely conceive," he very naturally remarks, "any exhibition more calculated to brutalise the young mind."

In the neighbourhood of Calcutta this odious spectacle is now only to be seen in the month of October, when it forms one of the chief attractions of the lengthened festival in honour of Durga, the wife of the aboriginal deity, Siva. It is, however, fast falling into disrepute, and will scarcely survive the present generation.

J. H.

EDIE.

"Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good: dwell in the land, and verily then shalt be fed."



I was desperately cold in the attics. The wind took a rush in through the broken glass, and made a bitter draught. The cold struck up through the boards upon Edie's little feet, through the thin walls and low roof it came down on her shoulders, till, curl them as she might, it was like freezing.

Poor little desolate Edie, in some warmer atmosphere how pretty she would have been! With her face half turned from the draughty window, one could see only her profile, but that was so pretty. A little round ear, lashes that curled upwards, a straight, delicate nose, and a thick plait of gold-brown hair. One could see at once that she was a little lady, though her surroundings were so poor. And they were poor. No touch of anything prettier on the walls than the damp that clung and oozed.

The birds could have dropped through the roof, only that even the little wet-through, spiritless sparrows could always find some shelter more inviting.

But, cold as were all these outward things, Edie's little heart was the coldest of all. Her thoughts were all hard, and had they been known, would have been found more freezing than the coldest touch.

She was angry about it all being so poor and cold, and could have broken her heart in one great longing for the different warmths of the world.

Faintly she could remember it all so different—papa's painting studio, where he used so often to sit, with Edie creeping noiselessly about the room, inspecting the half-finished pictures and bright paints. She could see again her little self prettily dressed, with all her golden hair loosely hanging to please papa. And that papa—there was nothing poor or cold about him. Edie could remember his easy ways and careless laugh, and the long golden moustache that was so soft against her cheek. That it was that very papa whose easy extravagance had brought them to this pass, Edie did not think. Better not. The easy ways, the extravagance, the careless laugh, and the long gold moustache, were all buried deep in a grave.

Edie's was a character that took in essentially all external things; though, perhaps, a less susceptible person might have disliked such extreme airiness of apartment on the 24th of March.

Be this as it may, however, when her mother's soft voice rang to her from their second room, little Edie almost forgot the dreadful cold, in the warmth of the few burning coals by which her mother and brother sat, the bright eyes of the little baby-sister looking fixedly at her.

The mother put her arm round Edie, caressing and

kissing her, and every one knows that a mother's touch is the softest thing in the world. The fire warmed Edie's shoulders, and pretty cold feet and hands, and the shower of kisses on her face (and her hair when she turned her face away), sank on her heart like warm rain on a dry land: pleasant and fair things grow there from it. As Edie thawed, words came to her in one long sweet murmur, as the waters of a frozen brook will sing at the last. Ah! if Edie would have only sung, it would have so filled and brightened that miserable home, and given such new life to them all!

But Edie had last raised her voice to give pleasure to that dead father, whose great happiness and joy she had been, and she fancied she could never again bear to break the silence without that one listener; and the mother would never ask it, though she knew how the sweet sounds would, at least, have strengthened herself. And more than this Edie could have done. She could have turned the talent into money, and so helped them.

They were her own songs that she sang, and were so peculiar and so charming and quaint, that there was little doubt that, had she shown them to a publisher, some at least would have been accepted. She could at any rate have tried.

But Edie's proud spirit would not take money in exchange for her gift; above all things she would not risk failure; and so, hoarded up within herself were the sweet strains, and it is a curious fact that light and lovely as were her songs, they weighed upon her heart like a heavy load, as unshed tears are pain.

It would have been better to have sung. It was Edie's birthday, and it was more sorrow to the mother, that for none of her children could she now extract pleasure.

"Darlings," she said, "I fear I can do nothing you will like?"

She spoke questioningly to both her children, but she looked especially at Edie. If Edie's woman-instinct had only taught her to ask for something, however slight, that her mother could give her; but it did not.

Her brother was kinder. "Come with us to hear the bells, mother," he said; "they will chime to-night. I was going alone, but it will be nicer if you and Edie come. It will not hurt baby, will it, in your shawl?"

The mother was only too glad to please him, and loved the bells; but Edie did not seem to care, though she put on her shabby hat to go.

Ah!, how the bells rang, and what memories they evoked! The mother conjured up an old scene that

had existed before Edie. Years ago, the moon rising had poured a stream of silver light on a hay-field, and on a little figure resting there. This was Edie's mother in the olden days. She had sunk down despairingly with her face to the ground, throwing up her arms above her head, and resting on them. This was how, after his long absence, her lover had found her, her face hidden, her hair scattered on the hay in a flood of white light. He had come home to claim her for his wife, and the bells rang a prelude to their sweet marriage chime. Then Edie's childhood—long beautiful hours, when the little toddling thing played upon the grass in her baby's white frock; when her father swung her up in her favourite elm, and her long blue sash floated on his arm; when the mother in the evening hushed her to sleep, and put her away in her pretty pink cradle. Other hours, when Edie was growing a stately little maiden, busy in the house, busy in the garden, her soft voice busy with snatches of song.

So years passed, and if trouble came to the old house at all, it never folded its wings to remain there.

Oh! world-wise bells to have known it all. But to Edie the bells rang fast, and her heart beat in unison. Every incident in the old dear past, starting up before her, took to itself wheels of fire, flashing round and round, while the bells still swung that insolently sweet descent. It was maddening!

Presently the chime changed; appealing, tender. It was as if thousands of little children were kneeling together in prayer. Edie thought of the delicate and frail things of earth, snow-drops, and the little, white, shrinking violets. Never once of her voice, though through the frosty air the bells were giving out *their* sweetness to all the sad and weary.

Oh! would Edie that you had been different.

The mother took cold that night, and the next was delirious with fever.

Edie walked about the miserable rooms with the little surprised baby-sister in her arms, stopping always at that particular cold angle where the mother lay with sweet staring eyes, and hot lips that unconsciously condemned Edie.

"Edie," she would say, "your father would have been so sorry that the dear little child he so loved should have grown up so useless—that Edie should do no more for me than the little baby-sister." Here, perhaps, the uncontrolled lips would break from the subject, but Edie, always hovering round the mattress, would soon hear the same words again.

It was all true. There lay the sorrow for Edie. She was useless as the little baby-sister in her arms. And this, not from incapability, but will. To herself, to others, Edie said she disliked it too much.

The little hands that had already, under her father's guidance, begun to handle the brush so

cleverly, shrank even to revolting from the raw meat that her mother's scant halfpence procured. And even with the little youngest child in her arms, Edie had often almost relaxed her hold in a reverie, where every happy instant of the past, taking to itself wings, rushed half-way to meet her thoughts.

Edie pressed kisses on her mother's lips, and answered. "Yes, yes, my dearest, but wake now to Edie's love. One more chance—oh, my mother, live!"

The passionate words could not, perhaps, reach even a mother's ears, for in the illness of delirium, who can say how near or how far the soul is? It seemed to Edie as if her mother's were already beyond the stars, as she knelt frightened by the bed. For Edie's mother had always been imaginative, though her steady good sense had kept it partially under control. But now that the strong will was for the moment beaten by delirium, the old vivid fancies of her mind resumed their sway.

She told Edie, as an authentic history, that she had been once riding at midnight by a lake, where though there was no moon, the starlight was so bright that it dazzled her eyes, while at the same time it was so cold that she shivered; that her horse, dazed with the strange whiteness around him, had ridden with her straight into the lake, where, with sharp, shooting pains, as the iced, glittering waters closed, higher, higher as she sank, she had yet never relaxed her gaze up into those shining heavens, and had so drowned, the stars at length, falling in a thick bright shower in the lake.

Edie, who had thought her mother so prosaic and practical, was perfectly astounded. So, hovering between two worlds, the mother lay days before her little frightened daughter could take back hope to her heart. But, little as Edie might have thought it, the mother's illness was a gain to her; it put kinder thoughts into her heart, and gentler words on her lips, and when the mother, at last, rose from her bed of pain, she found a change round her.

Edie's poor clothes, which the mother had feared would drop into very literal rags, were as sewn up and clean as before; the miserable rooms were no worse kept; the little baby-sister no longer cried when Edie took her. The generosity and justice that had lain always dormant in Edie's heart, had awakened now, and were in play. But Edie had done more than sweep the rooms and mend her own and her sister's things; she had written out her songs, and given them to her brother to take to a publisher, with whom they had once had some slight acquaintance.

And now, on the mother's recovery, there was the publisher's written acceptance to gladden her, and a few bright sovereigns to be laid in her hand.

And she had painted a picture, and this was the great triumph of her own and her mother's life.

She had commenced it with her mother's recovery, and finished it with her aid. An old Roman staircase, and in a window-niche a fair girl holding in her hand the agate lamp of the ancients. There was much value in the dark rich splendour with which she had painted the surroundings, and the bright jewels of sunlight she had let fall on so much of her neck as the girl's white toga left uncovered.

There were, of course, many defects, but there was also much real talent. Edie consulted her old friend the publisher, and through him the picture was sold. Edie dreams of a day when all her father's patrons shall give commissions to his daughter.

One scene more and I have done. Success has come to Edie. In a happy home on the English lakes, her mother and sister live with her, and there is no night so cold now that the wind can come through on Edie's shoulders and feet, the rooms are all too well hung for that. It is the close of the day. The mother puts by her work, the youngest sister (now a fair little girl like the Edie we first knew) her book, and Edie herself leaves her dearly-loved pictures to read them, as usual, the evening psalms: and on a hushed silence there falls these words, like a promise fulfilled:—"Trust thou in the Lord, and be doing good: dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." L. O.

SCRIPTURE ACROSTIC.

Two cities stood upon the slopes
Of hills in Galilee;
The miracles Christ wrought in them
Reveal His sympathy.

They show that He alike can share
In human joy and grief;
A blessing add in glad some hours,
In sorrow give relief.

1.—Oh, promised land! how many years
For thee did Israel sigh!
We also to our home above
Oft turn a longing eye.

2.—For limpid and translucent flow
This river bears the palm;
But Jordan's stream the power receives
To shed a healing balm.

3.—With sad and weary steps she came
Home to her native land;
For heavily the Lord on her
Had laid His chast'ning hand.

4.—The goodly spoil to the tent is brought,
And hid beneath the ground;
But none can elude Jehovah's eye,
As that transgressor found.

THE OLD GARDENER.

ONCE more to look upon the fragrant
Flowers he had sown in earlier days,
And mark what growths from rainfalls
vagrant;

Along the gravelled ways

The hoar old gardener totters slowly:
His cheek is glowing, not with health;
As he smiles a smile most sweet and holy
As thanks for all that wealth:

For all the wealth that lies before him,
And which he prayed once more to see,
Before the mould was smoothened o'er him—
Sown to eternity.

Once more his simple heart is singing
Such songs as only angels hear.
Those lives, from vital mould up-springing,
Are all his children dear!

He boweth down,—for he is weary;
His brow is bathed in dew and bloom;
What need of wail or Miserere?
Death hath more light than gloom.

His veined right hand, no longer busy,
Upon his breast in quiet lies;
He sleeps the sleep of rest. Or is he
Tilling in Paradise? B.